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AUTHOR Rippetoe, Joseph K.; Killacky, Cecil James
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ABSTRACT

Attempting to apply a sociological understanding of voluntary associations to the development of a practical model for rural community education, this paper is based on the assumptions that: there are a number of present-day educational needs which traditional systems of postsecondary education are not designed to meet; implications of this situation are presently more serious in rural than urban areas; and this problem can and should be resolved through community education programs which reflect careful synthesis of the experience of free universities in college communities with the sociological literature on voluntary associations. Reviewing the literature on voluntary associations, this paper considers traditional models of rural education within the context of the literature; examines the differences between rural and urban voluntary associations; and presents major elements of a rural educational model derived from the literature and the experience of free universities in college communities. By way of example, the University for Man (UFM), a free university located in Manhattan, Kansas, is described in terms of its development (1968-present) and its impact on small rural communities which modeled themselves after UFM in the development of community education programs (emphasis is on the necessity of advisory boards, a thorough needs assessment, and rural control over outside funding and expertise). Exemplary survey data derived from an experimental rural educational program are included. (JC)

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS: TOWARD A MODEL FOR RURAL COMMUNITY EDUCATION*

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Joseph K. Rippeto
and
Cecil James Killacky

University for Man
Manhattan, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to apply a sociological understanding of voluntary associations to the development of a practical model for rural community education. Existing literature on voluntary associations is examined, and the concept itself is broadened. Traditional models for rural educational programs are considered within the context of this literature. The differences between voluntary associations in rural and urban areas are discussed, and their implications for rural social programs, particularly educational ones, are emphasized. Elements of a rural educational model are then drawn together, with some major points deriving from the literature and others from the experience of free universities in college communities. Limited survey data gathered from an experimental rural educational program are used sparingly.

The Sociology of Voluntary Associations:
Toward a Model for Rural Community Education

Preparing a paper within the general area of applied sociology is a somewhat risky venture. The author who presents a thoroughly comprehensive review of the available theoretical and research literature on a given topic may not receive a serious hearing on his/her program of action, becoming bogged down instead with differing (and sometimes nitpicking) interpretations of that literature. Conversely, the writer who places greater emphasis on problem-solving applications and their implications invites challenge from another wing of the scholarly and scientific communities. We refer here to the "purists" who seem to have read every piece ever published in a given area and refuse to grant legitimacy to any argument not acknowledging, or refuting, the contributions of Professor X. This dilemma notwithstanding, we shall attempt to forge a link between the sociology of voluntary associations and a viable program for rural postsecondary education. The basic assumptions, or contentions, of this paper are three: (A) there are a number of present-day educational needs which traditional systems of postsecondary education are not really designed to meet; (B) the implications of this situation are presently more serious in rural than urban areas; and (C) this problem can and should be resolved through community education programs which reflect careful synthesis of th rience of free universities in college communities with the soci gical literature on voluntary associations. We turn to some of the literature first.

Voluntary Association Participation in America

A voluntary association has been defined as "a group of persons relatively freely organized to pursue mutual and personnel interests or to achieve common goals, usually non-profit in nature" (Scott, 1957:). Scott continues:

> "Volunteer associations have qualifying criteria for membership, offices held by selection or election so empowered by bye-laws and periodic meetings in a regular meeting place. Voluntary associations are in contrast to associations created and perpetuated through no choice of the members such as those created by fiat, or those affected by ascription, e.g., armies and clans. They differ too from those informal, ephemeral less structured groups such as cliques or gangs."

This generally concurs with Laskin (1962), who suggested that a voluntary association is any private group, voluntarily and more or less formally organized and joined and maintained by members pursuing a common interest, usually by means of part-time unpaid activities. Examples of such associations are quite well-known.

Social commentators from Tocqueville to present-day social scientists have indicated a proliferation of voluntary associations in American society. Tocqueville (1961:128) noted:

> "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds,-religious, moral, serious, futile, extensive or restricted, enormous or diminutive..."

While contemporary evidence has contributed to much consensus that such associations are pervasive, the level of agreement concerning the extent and characteristics of such participation in such groups is fairly low. Many social scientists have taken a giant inferential leap in assuming that if voluntary associations are a pervasive form of social organization, then most of us must be participants in them.

While there is indeed evidence which suggests that a sizeable proportion of Americans are in fact participants, this number (1) is not a majority, and (2) is contingent upon several important variables.

The widely-held belief that Americans are a nation of joiners is open to serious question. Wright and Hyman (1958) have noted that "missing in the literature is evidence of the voluntary association memberships of Americans in general and of important subgroups within the nation, derived from adequate sampling of the general population" (1958:285). Conducting secondary analysis of national survey data, they confirmed the conclusions drawn by previous researchers through local studies: a sizeable group of Americans were not members of any voluntary association and only a minority belonged to more than one. When voluntary association affiliation by <u>any</u> member of the respondent's family was counted as participation, the proportion of families stating no affiliation was 47%. However, when only the respondent's affiliation was considered the proportion of respondents stating no affiliation was increased to 64%. This difference has at least one serious implication for the present paper.

It seems most inappropriate, given the diversity of voluntary association types (see, for example, Warriner and Prather, 1965), to consider husband and wife--let alone other family members--as an associational unit. To do so would be to assume that <u>most</u> voluntary associations in some way serve the needs of non-participating family members as well as the participating one. Considering the range of associations in terms of their activities, both historically and today, it is hard to imagine too many which might serve this function. The problem with using family participation, then, is simply that it provides

a gross overrepresentation of individual participation in voluntary groups. Some researchers (for example, Rohrer and Dakin, 1965) have relied on the family participation figure to suggest that the evidence supports Tocqueville's observation that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations" (1965:2). Again, however, nearly 2 out of every 3 subjects in Wright and Hyman's investigation reported no personal affiliation.

What is this minority of joiners like? Wright and Hyman (1958) note that participation in voluntary associations is more likely the higher a person's income level, educational level, and general standard of living, and that membership is more characteristic among business and professional people, and among property owners. All of these findings were generally confirmed by their subsequent research (Hyman and Wright, 1971). They also noted a general (though not exceptionally strong) correlation between urbanization and voluntary association membership. This final point in particular needs to be examined further.

Rural Life and Voluntary Associations

In urban, industrialized society, a greater rate of participation in voluntary associations may be a reflection of the fragmentation and privatization of human relationships within contemporary American society. Slater (1970:7) argues, in fact, that an "enormous technology seems to have set itself the task of making it unnecessary for one human being ever to ask anything of another in the course of going about his daily business." Some types of voluntary associations within this context may be considered attempts to satisfy a human need for more personal kinds of relationships.

The situation in the rural heartland, however, seems dramatically different. Low population density and expansive physical distances

both contribute to an increased economic cost of social interaction. Traditionalism appearsto deny the importance of many kinds of associations often found in urban industrial society. Several conditions of rural life are also undergoing enormous change, and Kansas, in the very mid-section of rural America, provides some examples. The age structure of the Kansas population is undergoing a substantial shift. Flora (1973) reports that "Kansas as a whole has a general outmigration of young people in the productive age groups." Many small Kansas communities are declining as they become less and less able to provide full employment and full services for their members. Focusing primarily on the former, they envision industrial recruitment as the solution for retaining their youth. Unfortunately, the population problem of many Kansas communities extends far beyond the retention of young people. Flora also points out that the "proportion of aged in Kansas is increasing," another trend contributing to the increasingly critical shortage of rural Kansans in the productive age groups. Finally, a rapidly-expanding agri-industry is contributing to the disappearance of family farms and thus, to some extent, to additional outmigration. The extent of outmigration in six rural Kansas communities, along with some of their other demographic characteristics, is outlined in Table I.

Existing rural voluntary associations are becoming increasingly less effective in confronting the above and other contemporary rural social problems. According to Rohrer and Dakin (1965), this is not so much the case because of the inability of the rural milieu to support large numbers of people, but rather its particular inability to support white-collar workers, professionals and other occupational groups which are traditionally very active in voluntary associations. In

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	Population 1970 (1)	Change in Population 1960 - 1970 (2)	County Net Migration Rate 1960 - 1970 (3)	% of all Families Below Poverty Level (4)	Median Family Income (5)	Median School Years Completed - persons 25 years and over (6)
Abilene (Dickinson Co.)	6,661	-1.3	-10.3	9.2 (964)	$8,049	12.3
Clay Center (Clay Co.)	4,963	7.6	-6.7	12.5 (1074)	$7,289	12.0
Colby (Thomas Co.)	4,658	10.6	-8.7	5.4 (672)	$8,964	12.5
Hoxie (Sheridan Co.)	1,419	10.1	-18.9	32.0* (1992)	$6,107*	12.4*
Marysville (Marshall Co.)	3,588	-13.4	-16.0	7.3 (485)	$7,338	12.0
Oberlin (Decatur Co.)	2,291	-2.0	-16.7	19.5* (1518)	$6,952*	12.1*

*Figures available for county only

References:

Columns 1 & 2

Reference Tables: Population Change of Counties and Incorporated Places in Kansas, 1950-1970 by Cornelia B. Flora, Supervisor-Population Studies Laboratory Report of Progress, 177, June, 1971.

Column 3

The Impact of Migration on Kansas
Bulletin 570, June, 1973
Agricultural Experiment Station
Kansas State University Agriculture and Applied Science
Manhattan, Kansas

Columns 4, 5 and 6

General Social and Economic Characteristics-Kansas
1970 - Census of Population
U. S. Department of Commerce
Bureau of the Census
Issued February, 1972

discussing possible solutions to this problem, Rohrer and Dakin suggest that perhaps "it would be reasonable to list religious denominations and that adult educational agencies of colleges and universities among the external organizations that would motivate residents to develop their communities or areas" (1965:16). This, in a nutshell, is what our program is all about.

The Problem

Let us look at our basic assumptions in more detail. (1) The educational needs which traditional systems of postsecondary education are unable to meet can be divided into two general categories. Some of them are content-oriented, such as interpersonal growth, manual skill development and training, introductions to new forms of leisure activity, development of the individual's ability to relate to nature, development of individual "survival skills" in a time of economic chaos (e.g., gardening, cooking, and home repair), and dissemination of information about community problems, projects, and issues. Our initial community education enrollment survey indicated substantial interest in these topics (See Table II).

Table II*

Distribution of Interest Areas Indicated by Community Education Participants

1.	Academic college-level subjects (scientific, technological)	18 (8%)
2.	Academic college-level subjects (art, humanities, languages)	45 (20%)
3.	Trade, business, agricultural, or vocational subjects	38 (17%)
4.	Hobbies, leisure, or recreational activities	145 (64%)
5.	Interpersonal relations	49 (22%)
6.	Religious activities	22 (10%)
7.	"Survival skills" (cooking, gardening, home repairs, etc.)	58 (26%)
8.	Betterment of physical and mental health; legal and "consumer" health	57 (25%)
9.	Community projects, problems, and issues	36 (16%)
10.	Other _____	2 (1%)

N=226

*Respondents were asked to check as many responses as applied.

Other learner needs have to do with the educational process itself, and various educational agencies and institutions are experimenting with new learning environments, exploring new concepts in adult learning and methods of orienting education toward the adult learner, and attempting to build a sense of community into the educational process at all levels.

Traditional institutions have attempted to meet the needs outlined above, and similar ones also, with everything from non-traditional studies to extension agents to the convening of topical conferences. Some of these efforts have enjoyed limited success, particularly in smaller and/or private colleges. Nevertheless, with rare exceptions, these successes have occurred through institutions where educational fees are very high. Within large independent and traditional state universities, on the other hand, such efforts have generally fallen short of their goals. This overall record of experience seems to highlight the need for some new educational models.

(2) The need for new educational models is particularly evident in rural areas of the country. There are, in our view, some fundamental problems with the structure of more university extension and continuing educational programs. The systems of outreach in the Kansas universities provide some examples. Despite offering a wide array of credit and non-credit courses, educational conferences, and other programs such as non-traditional study, Kansas State University's "non-credit continuing education activities must be self-supporting (from fees collected or from special grants or contracts)" (1976:16). This places immediate limitations on the type and content of educational services which Kansans will receive. Any new educational model for the state must, in effect, derive from the university's determination of a financial break-even point.

Credit programs are unfortunately more limiting, as participation fees are generally higher since the potential audience is smaller, largely a collection of public school teachers and certain other professionals who must periodically update their credentials. The demand for such programs is relatively low, according to data gathered from our program's participants (See Table III). As Table III indicates, college credits are not seen by participants in our program as a major motivating factor in continuing their educations. The data, therefore, seems to raise questions concerning the basic assumptions of other agencies attempting to provide educational services for rural areas.

Table III*

Distribution of Participants Plans for Continuing Their Educations

1.	Taking college courses for credit toward degree	28 (12%)
2.	Taking college courses, but not to pursue degree	35 (15%)
3.	Taking non-credit courses through this project	118 (52%)
4.	Taking non-credit courses through other agencies	17 (8%)

N=226

*Respondents were asked to check as many responses as applied.

For the remainder of the population not in this recertification situation, an educational model is needed which can respond more quickly, more cost-effectively, and more completely to non-credit educational needs. It is our position that such a model can be locally developed with the aid of a few resource persons. Living in every community are individuals who possess information and skills worth sharing. Within the same community are individuals who want and often need access to these talents. Rarely, however, does there exist a public

mechanism which links people together so that learning and sharing may occur. Too often individual talent is not publicly identified and remains largely unknown to others in the community. A mechanism can be created which will not only identify this talent but make it accessible to the rest of the community.

(3) To many observers, our proposition for dealing with this problem will seem to derive from unlikely sources: (A) from the practical experience of free universities in college communities; and (B) from the body of literature known as the sociology of voluntary associations. Having examined some of that literature, we turn to one case of the free university experience.

University for Man and Rural Education

University for Man (UFM) is a free university community education organization located in Manhattan, Kansas.[1] The basic assumption of this agency is that in any community there are people who can educate and people who wish to be educated regardless of formal academic qualifications. This assumption has been accepted and proved viable. In the spring of 1968, seven courses were offered and taken by some 150 people. During 1975, UFM courses and projects in the KSU/Manhattan/Ft. Riley area numbered over 800 and involved over 12,000 participants. Current course offerings fall into several categories: fine arts, crafts, philosophy, theology, earth, community, sports, skills, and foods. All courses are led by unpaid volunteers, are open to anyone, and are free of charge. UFM is supported by KSU's Division of Continuing Education and Student Governing Association, the Manhattan chapter of

1. It should be noted that the name University for Man was conceived in 1967. In view of the phenomenal growth of the Women's Liberation Movement a major staff priority at this time is a name change. The UFM program has been elaborated in greater detail elsewhere (see, for example, Rippetoe and Maes, 1974; Sinnett, et al., 1976).

the United Way, and various grants for special projects. It is a sponsor and/or umbrella organization for a food co-op, crisis hotline, drug education center, free school (pending), and the National Free University Network. UFM staff members also work or consult with a wide range of local, regional and national groups, both traditional and non-traditional.

In the spring and summer of 1973, UFM began, in response to a growing number of inquiries, to explore the possibilities of developing similar education projects in smaller non-university rural communities. The first phase, carried out over the following two years, involved a series of community "town-hall" forums held in three nearby communities. These were organized under the general heading "The Future of Small Towns in Kansas: The Case of X," with X being the town in question. A detailed analysis of this phase is reported elsewhere (Killacky and Rippetoe, 1976). In addressing the future potential in the broad area of community education and the use of local resources following the UFM model, we were unequivocally urged to devote some effort to developing local community education projects in each of these places.

Two project grants were therefore written. The first requested the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to provide funding to create community education projects in six towns per year for two years.[2] The second requested ACTION to supply twelve Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) who would serve as local coordinators in each of the six communities. After having overcome

2. Three of these towns are in Northcentral Kansas and three are in the Northwest part of the state. The primary focus of this paper will be the Northcentral region.

the shock of both grants being awarded and some dreams actually being realized, we set about transferring those dreams into concrete reality. The awards were particularly significant for two reasons. It was the first time that a free university had been so honored, and the FIPSE grant was valued at $75,000. Second, the project was and still is the only one of its kind in which the concept of a free university is being implemented in small rural communities.

The FIPSE grant became effective with the start of the fiscal year, and the VISTA's were to arrive three months later. After spending the first month of the new fiscal year sorting through incredible bureaucratic hassles, e.g., setting up accounting procedures, hiring the staff, and filling out forms, we actually got into the field by August. The next two months were spent (1) assembling local advisory boards for each project, and (2) assessing community needs with respect to course offerings and other projects. We targeted having the first brochure of courses available by mid-October.

The Advisory Boards

A common problem with federally-supported projects, one to which rural people are especially sensitive, is that they often involve the arrival of outside experts whose task is then to explain how to do things. Although in many cases this is exactly what needs to be done, it is important to develop procedures through which this goal can be expedited while gaining community support rather than hostility or antagonism. The use of an advisory board is one such procedure. To be effective for our purposes, it was crucial that the board be as representative as possible of all segments of the community. Through informal conversations, beginning with personal contacts established from the

forums and fanning out from there, we met with a broad range of people during the first few weeks, and consequently put together what one might call "model boards." In one community, for instance, the board included the newspaper editor, superintendent of schools, two attorneys (one new, one well-established), a retired person, a minister, a doctor, three homemakers, a farmer, a schoolteacher, and two social workers. The most obvious omission is an unemployed or under employed poor person. Our experience has suggested, however, that while representation would be very desirable, people in such a situation--with rare exceptions--function very poorly in a public decision-making capacity. Also, in this particular instance at least, the interests of the poor are excellently advocated for by the minister and the social workers. Similar board compositions were developed in the other communities, and the role of the board was loosely defined to include serving as adivsors, resources, publicity givers, and overall supporters of the project.

The Needs Assessment and the Program

Federally-supported projects, generally speaking, have been known to spend vast amounts of time and money conducting feasibility studies and needs assessments. Typically, these involve the use of elaborate methodologies and statistical procedures to gather massive amounts of data, all of which are reported to the appropriate bureaucrats but provide little or no benefits for people at the local level. We too did a needs assessment, but most traditional social scientists will no doubt shudder at the process. Armed with our general skepticism of overdone and impractical needs assessments, and not wishing to fall into such traps, we established very early in the process that these

projects were to be 100% locally oriented. They were not designated "UFM at town X," but rather Town X's Community Education Project, which is supported in part by the expertise of the UFM staff.

In developing courses for the first fall term, it was important to have as much community input as possible. To find out what people wanted to teach or learn, a very simple flyer was created for mailings to all clubs and organizations, teachers, and a selected list of some 400 people in each area. It was also published in part in each local newspaper. The responses provided the basis for the first series of courses. We met our mid-October target date and produced a brochure featuring 15-20 courses per community, of which approximately 90% were led by local people. These courses were a microcosm of what is offered through UFM in Manhattan, as they covered a broad range of pursuits from scholastics to crafts and sports to foods.[3]

The brochures were widely distributed, then each community/county registration was held. When the enrollments in the three northcentral Kansas towns ranged from 250-550, we, the advisory boards, and everybody else were pleasantly amazed at such a response.

The VISTA's arrived on the project late in the fall, underwent initial training, and spent some time getting adjusted to their new environs. They then commenced work on the development of spring courses and programs, following a similar though more extensive pattern as the fall. By the end of January 1976, course brochures listing from 25 to 50 events per community had been published and distributed. The response

3. We have a very limited supply of brochures to share. If interested, write to Jim Killacky or Joe Rippetoe, UFM, 615 Fairchild Terrace, Manhattan, Kansas 66502, and include self-addressed stamped manilla envelope for return.

to the spring program also increased significantly in every community. As of this writing, the VISTA's are involved in other community projects and gathering ideas for a summer program.

While enrollment data from the spring courses are not completely analyzed, preliminary indications are similar to that of the fall. A most important factor in the fall, as shown in Tables IV and V below, is that course participants reflected the entire spectrum of ages and levels of formal education. We are quite encouraged by this, for far too often many worthwhile community programs are restricted to particular segments of the population.

Overall, the major challenges to be addressed in this project are two: (1) to set up viable programs of community education following the UFM model, and (2) to establish frameworks at the local level for their continuation. At this point, it is fair to say that the first of these challenges has been successfully expedited. We are presently concentrating on the second one, and the results will be known in the next six to twelve months.

Implications

As noted earlier, America is a nation replete with an inordinate number of voluntary associations. The proliferation of such associations has generated a greater demand for coordinating activities to determine what needs are and are not being met, and to guard against fruitless duplication of activities. Unfortunately, this need for coordination often goes unfulfilled. Moreover, an enormous number of contemporary voluntary associations fail to transcend social divisions according to age, sex, socio-economic status, and so forth. These two conditions taken together have brought into focus the need for community education.

TABLE IV

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE

Age	Frequency	Age	Frequency
8	1	46	3
10	2	47	2
11	1	48	6
12	1	49	7
13	1	50	5
16	7	51	2
17	3	52	3
18	1	53	4
19	3	54	4
20	3	55	5
21	1	56	3
22	2	57	7
23	2	58	6
24	1	59	8
25	3	60	6
26	5	61	6
27	5	62	2
28	2	63	1
29	3	64	2
30	6	65	5
31	4	66	4
32	6	67	3
33	1	68	2
34	1	69	4
35	2	70	2
36	4	71	1
37	5	72	3
38	5	74	1
39	3	76	3
40	3	78	1
41	7	84	1
42	2	90	1
43	5		N=219
44	4		
45	1		Mean = 45

TABLE V

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO HIGHEST LEVEL OF FORMAL EDUCATION

11th Grade or Less	21	(9.3%)
High School Graduate	93	(41.3%)
Trade, Business or Technical School Diploma	20	(8.9%)
One to Three Years College	41	(18.2%)
College Graduate	32	(14.2%)
Graduate or Professional Degree	18	(8.0%)
	N=225	(100%)

A community education "association" can accomplish objectives which traditional voluntary associations are unable to.

For example, in rural America today there is considerable concern about the plight of the small farmer. In one of our communities/counties, there are a large number of farm organizations and each has offered some programs dealing with this matter. As might be expected, the response has generally been limited to supporters of that particular group. Late in 1975, however, a day-long seminar was offered through the community education project and all of the farm organizations were invited to be co-sponsors. An overwhelming 230 farmers showed up and spent the day in earnest discussion. Since then, several spin-off groups have developed and a major series of educational seminars is planned for this spring and next fall, with local, regional and national resource people. Had any one of the existing farm organizations attempted such a project on their own, the results, by their own admission, would not have been nearly as effective.

As the day-long farm seminar suggests, each individual class within a community education agency can be considered a voluntary association in and of itself. Such associations, given a conducive framework, can be rapidly organized depending on need and/or interest, and easily disbanded in favor of more necessary and viable associations. The framework, with a Board of Advisors, can then serve the coordinating function which is so often unattended to in American communities.

The differences between such a network of associations and traditional structures of voluntary groups are (at least) three. The system, first of all, is flexible. Associations are formed on the basis of present-day needs and interests. Participants are not shackled by an organizational

structure which is unable to adapt to contemporary needs, interests, problems, and issues. The system is also flexible in terms of the time span and frequency of association meetings. Classes and other groups can last a length from one time to every week for six months, or even indefinitely. They can meet for an hour per meeting or be organized as day-long workshops. Finally, they transcend the traditional social divisions noted earlier on participation in voluntary associations, e.g., age, sex, socio-economic status, and the farm/town schism. These three points are in contrast to voluntary groups which devote more attention to structure than content, meet within certain preconceived time frames whether or not they are appropriate to the business at hand, and focus their programs toward only certain segments of the community. Community education, in dealing with these three problems, provides a superb forum through which one can develop means for significant learning, a sense of community social action, and the potential for social change with a minimum of bureaucracy and other incumbering annoyances which have often beset voluntary associations.

Finally, let us briefly consider what seems to a crucial factor not usually dealt with in the literature, i.e., the necessary tools for the organizer to create such a framework of operations.[4] There are (at least) three major considerations: (a) commitment and self-confidence; (b) practical and theoretical knowledge; and (c) a solid support system. If we assume that change is one of the end goals, then

4. Space and time permit but a cursory examination of these tools. A fuller treatment will be forthcoming in a paper tentatively entitled "What the Community Organization Literature does not tell...but you need to Know Anyhow."

these ingredients are essential. For change is initially frightening to some--we have dealt with skepticism, lots of hard questions, resistance, and at times hostility. Without commitment, confidence, knowledge--both practical and theoretical--and support, then failure becomes a real possibility. The first three are essential to deal with the hard questions at the late night meetings which may keep one away from home. Support is necessary both at the working level of, for instance, the advisory board, but also at the personal collegial level. When one returns from a difficult meeting it may be crucial to have someone to go over it with and perhaps be a shoulder. It is equally important to have support persons to share the joys and the high points with, people who can not only share happiness and satisfaction but who can sit down and realistically brainstorm further strategies so that such good can be perpetuated.

Conclusion

We have in these preceeding pages attempted to forge the beginning links between the sociology of voluntary associations and a viable program of rural postsecondary education. The work is relatively new, informal, and sociologically in the embyonic stages of theory building. To some it may be exciting and challenging, to others it may even be unpalatable because it does not follow the traditional normative paths for such ventures. Hopefully, it will raise questions for almost all, and stimulate debate, controversy and critical analysis. One result may then be the perpetuation of significant social action, applied sociology in both rural and urban settings so that the lives of all may be enhanced, and that ours might be a more reasonable world in which to exist.

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